IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended) A method for producing an α-hydroxycarboxylic acid, which comprises hydrolyzing cyanohydrin in the presence of a hydrocarbon solvent selected from chain hydrocarbons containing 5 to 16 carbons, saturated monocyclic hydrocarbons containing between 6 and 16 carbon atoms, and aromatic hydrocarbons.

2. (currently amended) A method for producing an α-hydroxycarboxylic acid according to claim 1, ~~which comprises~~further comprising separating and removing the hydrocarbon solvent phase from a reaction solution after hydrolysis reaction.

3. (currently amended) The method for producing an α-hydroxycarboxylic acid according to claim 1, wherein the hydrolysis reaction is carried out using mineral acid selected from hydrochloric acid, sulfuric acid, boracic acid, phosphoric acid, and perchloric acid.

4-6. (cancelled)

7. (currently amended) A method for producing an optically active α-hydroxycarboxylic acid, which comprises hydrolyzing optically active cyanohydrin, using at most 10 equivalents of mineral acid selected from hydrochloric acid, sulfuric acid, boracic acid, phosphoric acid and perchloric acid relative to said optically active cyanohydrin under the condition that maximum temperature when reacting is 90°C or less.

8. (currently amended) A method for producing an optically active crystalline α-hydroxycarboxylic acid, which comprises crystallizing optically active α-hydroxycarboxylic acid in an aqueous solution.

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9. (currently amended) The method for producing an optically active crystalline α-hydroxycarboxylic acid according to claim 8, which comprises crystallizing optically active α-hydroxycarboxylic acid in the presence of a non-miscible organic solvent.

10. (cancelled)

11. (currently amended) A method for producing an optically active crystalline α-hydroxycarboxylic acid, which comprises crystallizing optically active α-hydroxycarboxylic acid obtained by the method according to claim 4, in an aqueous solution.

12 (cancelled)

13. (currently amended) A method for producing an optically active crystalline α-hydroxycarboxylic acid, which comprises crystallizing optically active α-hydroxycarboxylic acid obtained by the method according to claim 7, in an aqueous solution.

14. (currently amended) The method for producing an α-hydroxycarboxylic acid according to Claim 1, wherein said hydrocarbon solvent is chain hydrocarbon or cyclic hydrocarbon.

15. (currently amended) The method for producing an α-hydroxycarboxylic acid according to Claim 1, wherein said hydrocarbon solvent is aromatic hydrocarbon.

16. (currently amended) The method for producing an α-hydroxycarboxylic acid according to Claim 1, wherein said hydrocarbon solvent is benzene, toluene, or xylene.

17. (currently amended) A method for producing an α-hydroxycarboxylic acid, which comprises hydrolyzing optically active cyanohydrin in the presence of a hydrocarbon solvent selected from chain hydrocarbons containing 5 to 16 carbons, saturated monocyclic

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hydrocarbons containing between 6 and 16 carbon atoms, and aromatic hydrocarbons, using at most 10 equivalents of mineral acid selected from hydrochloric acid, sulfuric acid, boracic acid, phosphoric acid, and perchloric acid relative to said optically active cyanohydrin under the condition that maximum temperature when reacting is 90°C or less.

18. (currently amended) A method for producing an optically active crystalline α-hydroxycarboxylic acid, which comprises hydrolyzing optically active cyanohydrin, using at most 10 equivalents of mineral acid selected from hydrochloric acid, sulfuric acid, boracic acid, phosphoric acid, and perchloric acid relative to said optically active cyanohydrin under the condition that maximum temperature when reacting is 90°C or less, then crystallizing optically active α-hydroxycarboxylic acid in an aqueous solution.

19. (currently amended) An optically active chloromandelic acid crystalline ~~obtained by the method according to claim 1, whose~~ with a packing density ~~is~~ of more than 0.5 g/cm^3.

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